



In Memoriam: Former Mint Director Mary Brooks

February 25, 2002

Mary Elizabeth Thomas Peavey Brooks, former Director of the U.S. Mint, died on February 11, 2002, in Twin Falls, Idaho. She was 94.

Brooks, appointed by President Nixon, led the U.S. Mint from September 1969 until February 1977. She was the third woman in history named to the post.

“Mary Brooks was a credit to the Mint,” said current Mint Director Henrietta Holsman Fore. “Though it’s been nearly a quarter-century since she was Director, her legacy to the Mint, to the numismatic community and the nation, is still evident.”

Brooks’ career in public service was a family tradition. Her father, John Thomas, was a U.S. Senator from Idaho and her second husband, C. Wayland “Curly” Brooks, was a U.S. Senator from Illinois. She served in the Idaho State Senate from 1963 to 1969, when she was named to head the U.S. Mint. Her son, John Peavey, was appointed to her senate seat and served for another 20 years.

During her administration at the U.S. Mint, Brooks oversaw the production of the Eisenhower dollar coin as well as the redesign of America’s quarter, half dollar and dollar coins for the country’s bicentennial.

She is also credited with saving the original San Francisco Mint building, known as the “Granite Lady,” by transferring it to the Treasury Department. The building, one of the few to survive the Great Earthquake of 1906, had been vacant since 1937 and fallen into disrepair. It is now both a National Historic Landmark and a California Historic Landmark. The city currently plans to turn it into a museum to commemorate the historical significance of the U.S. Mint in San Francisco. Brooks received the “I Left My Heart In San Francisco” Award in 1974 from the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau for her preservation efforts.

In addition, Brooks was awarded the American Numismatic Association’s Medal of Merit in 1988, and was the first woman to receive the Alexander Hamilton Award, the U.S. Treasury Department’s highest honor. She was inducted into the University of Idaho Alumni Association’s Hall of Fame in 1970. The university also conferred upon her an honorary doctorate in 1999.

Brooks was as comfortable talking with captains of industry and Washington’s power elite as she was with sheep ranchers. She managed her father’s Idaho sheep ranch for 16 years after his death until her son took it over in 1961. He said “She was just as much at home with rancher as she was with presidents.” Indeed, her Idaho license plate read “MTN MARY.”

Brooks was born to John and Florence Thomas on Nov. 1, 1907, in Colby, Kans. Her parents moved to Gooding, Idaho, when she was an infant. After graduating from high school in 1925, she attended Mills College in Oakland, Calif., for two years before receiving her bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Idaho in 1929.

She is survived by a son, John, of Carey, Idaho; a daughter, Elizabeth Ann “Betty” Eccles, of McCall, Idaho; six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- For information about the United States Mint, please visit [/about/about](#).
- To subscribe to United States Mint electronic product notifications, news releases, and public statements, visit <https://catalog.usmint.gov/email-signup>.
- Sign up for [RSS Feeds](#) from the United States Mint and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#).

#

United States Mint – Connecting America through Coins

Contact

Press Inquiries: Office of Corporate Communications (202) 354-7222

Tags: [Headquarters](#) [Press Release](#) [Public](#)

1-800-USA-MINT

SIGN UP FOR EMAIL UPDATES AND TEXT MESSAGE ALERTS ABOUT PRODUCTS

EMAIL ADDRESS

Subscribe

+1 ### ### ###

Sign Up